

CONGRESSWOMAN

# Carolyn McCarthy

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## Seniors Accomplishments - 107<sup>th</sup> Congress

*Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy is fighting for the issues seniors care about most: retirement security and healthcare. As a nurse, she has years of experience dealing with different aspects of the healthcare system, and she is using that knowledge to strengthen Medicare. Her priorities include adding a prescription drug benefit to Medicare and reforming the Medicare+Choice Program. Her seat on the House Education and Workforce Committee gives her ample opportunities to work on pension reform, and she is involved in the fight to save Social Security, a necessity for the American retiree.*

### **ADDING A PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT TO MEDICARE**

Prescription drug costs are skyrocketing, and Medicare's minimal coverage leaves much to be desired. Congresswoman McCarthy has introduced legislation to ease this financial burden, and she has cosponsored several bills that reform Medicare by adding a prescription drug benefit.

**H.R. 1400, the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act**, calls for prescription drug price reductions for Medicare beneficiaries.

**H.R. 758, the Breast Cancer Prescription Drug Fairness Act**, is Congresswoman McCarthy's bill to reduce prescription drug prices for seniors on Medicare, along with women diagnosed with breast cancer.

Allows Medicare recipients and women diagnosed with breast cancer to buy drugs at the discounted rate that drug companies charge the federal government

**H.R. 3317, the Medicare Drug Cost Savings Act**, amends Medicare to provide beneficiaries coverage for self-administered drugs that are used to replace previously covered drugs.

**H.R. 4998, The Pharmaceutical Fiscal Accountability Act of 2002**, is Congresswoman McCarthy's bill that seeks to increase competition and lower prescription drug costs by removing barriers that prevents many generic drugs from coming to the market quicker.

Reduces the 180 day exclusivity for generic drugs to 60 days  
Provide Research and Development Assistance for Small Biotech Firms  
Requires drug manufactures that receive grants from NIH to develop drugs pay 5% of successful drugs profits to NIH

- ✓ **H.R. 828, the Senior's Health Care Choice Act**, expands coverage of preventive services and provides coverage of outpatient prescription drugs under the Medicare program.

### **REFORMING MEDICARE**

When Congress passed the Balanced Budget Act in 1997 to give seniors more healthcare choices, they created the Medicare+Choice Program. Today, five years later, Nassau seniors are facing numerous problems with their Medicare coverage: increasing premiums, HMO pullouts from Nassau, and few choices. Congresswoman McCarthy is trying to fix the problems Nassau seniors endure through their enrollment in Medicare+Choice by contacting those involved from other branches of the government, and by cosponsoring several pieces of legislation.

Congresswoman McCarthy wrote Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson about the number of problems associated with the Medicare+Choice program.

**H.R. 287, the Prompt Payment of Health Benefit Claims Act**, is legislation introduced by Congresswoman McCarthy to make sure Medicare+Choice plans, along with other HMOs, provide their beneficiaries with prompt payments once claims have been submitted.

- ✓ **H.R. 145, the HMO Solvency Act**, assures the financial solvency of Medicare+Choice organizations in an attempt to prevent future premium increases and HMO pullouts.
- ✓ **H.R. 148, the Medicare HMO Improvement Act**, addresses the repercussions of HMO pullouts from Medicare+Choice, primarily the sudden disruption of Medicare beneficiary enrollment in Medicare+Choice plans.
- ✓ **H.R. 822, Medicare Certified Registered Nurse Reimbursement**, provides coverage for surgical first assisting services furnished by certified registered nurse first assistants.
- ✓ **H.R. 1490, Homebound Clarification Act**, to clarify the definition of homebound with respect to home health services under Medicare.
- ✓ **H.R. 1556, American Hospital Preservation Act**, increases the amount of payment for inpatient hospital services under Medicare and freezes the reduction in payments to

hospitals for indirect costs of medical education

- ✓ **H.R. 1624, Access to Cancer Therapies Act**, extends Medicare coverage to all oral drugs prescribed for use as an anti-cancer agent for medically accepted indication
- ✓ **H.R. 3391, the Medicare Regulatory and Contracting Reform Act**, helps Medicare beneficiaries understand and navigate the Medicare program and benefits.
- ✓ **H.R. 274, the Seniors Healthcare Bill of Rights**, provides HMOs with incentive payments for multi-year contracts under the Medicare+Choice program.
- ✓ **H.R. 2836, the Medicare+Choice Equity and Access Act**, fixes problems associated with reimbursements by providing Medicare+Choice organizations equitable reimbursement rates.
- ✓ **H.R. 2980, the Medicare+Choice Stabilization and Improvement Act**, stabilizes and improves the Medicare+Choice program a variety of ways.
- ✓ **H.R. 3584, Medicare+Choice Improvement and Stabilization Act**, improves payments and regulations under the Medicare+Choice program.

## **PROTECTING SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE**

Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy works to protect Social Security and Medicare benefits by passing legislation to protect the program funds.

- ✓ Passed **H.R. 2, the Social Security and Medicare Lockbox Act**, to prevent any Social Security and Medicare surpluses from being used for any purpose other than providing retirement and health security.
- ✓ Passed **H. Con. Res. 282, the Keeping the Social Security Promise Initiative**, which states Congress' desire to save and strengthen Social Security by developing legislation as soon as possible.
  - Guarantees current promised benefits, including cost-of-living adjustments fully indexed for inflation, for current and future retirees, without tax increases.
  - Recognizes the needs of minorities and how Social Security is related to poverty prevention and levels of financial security in many communities.
  - States Social Security reforms should recognize the obstacles faced by women.
  - Expresses Congress' belief that the President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security should come up with ways to protect the immense financial commitment American workers pay into the Social Security system, without lowering benefits or increasing taxes.

Congresswoman McCarthy has voted on several amendments to larger bills in the hopes of saving the Social Security Trust Fund and passing REAL Social Security reform..

- When the President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security released its findings, they recommended three courses of action, all revolving around privatization of Social Security. McCarthy voted to block the use of federal funds

- for implementing the Commission's recommendations.  
McCarthy voted to make tax cuts for the wealthy tied to protection for Social Security and Medicare surpluses.

## MODERNIZING SOCIAL SECURITY AND PENSION PLANS

Social Security is the basis for the American worker's retirement. While some workers rely solely on those funds, others have pension plans. Not only does Social Security need to be strengthened, and certain formulas re-evaluated, but pension plans must be reformed.

- √ Passed **H.R. 1140, the Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act**, which modernizes the pension portion of the railroad retirement plan.
  - Increases benefits to railroad employees and their beneficiaries.
  - Revises the financing part of the pension plan, without changing Tier I, the railroad counterpart to Social Security.
- √ **H.R. 122, the Social Security Benefits Tax Relief Act**, repeals the 1993 income tax increase on Social Security benefits.
- √ **H.R. 664** changes the formula used to determine the amount of reduced monthly benefits payable to a spouse, surviving spouse, or parent receiving monthly payments from a Federal or State pension plan.
  - Reductions in Social Security benefits, which are required in the case of spouses and surviving spouses who are also receiving certain government pensions, will be equal to the amount by which the total amount of the combined monthly benefit (before reduction) and monthly pension exceeds \$1,200.

## HELPING SENIORS WITH LONG-TERM CARE

Congresswoman McCarthy sees long-term care as a family issue. She is aware of the growing number of seniors needing long-term care, and the number of families who opt to care for them instead of putting their loved ones in a home. She wants to make sure adult children can care for their dependent parents. She is working to increase choices and coverage for long-term care, as well as tax credits for seniors and their families.

- √ Passed **HR 271**, which designated land for use as assisted living senior centers, became Public Law 107-28.
- √ Passed **H.R. 4946, Improving Access to Long-Term Care Act of 2002**, provides immediate tax relief and protects consumers from things such as unfair or deceptive sales or enrollment practices
- √ **H.R. 579, the Federal Family Health Coverage Act**, gives federal employees the option of obtaining health coverage for their dependent parents.
- √ **H.R. 3331, the Quality Care for Nursing Home Patients Act**, imposes certain staffing requirements for nursing facilities receiving payments under either Medicare or Medicaid.
- √ **H.R. 1490, the Homebound Clarification Act**, clearly defines the term "homebound" to clarify home health services coverage under Medicare.

## **SUPPORTING A FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE BUDGET**

Congresswoman McCarthy understands what happens when the government is irresponsible with their finances—that is why she supports fiscally sound budget plans each year. As a member of the Budget Committee, Congresswoman McCarthy is involved in the intricacies of proper budgeting, and is working hard to ensure seniors a prescription drug benefit under Medicare.

In FY '02, Congresswoman McCarthy worked with her colleagues to pass a budget and spending plan that utilized the surplus, benefitted working families and protected retirees.

For FY '03, Congresswoman McCarthy will remain a fiscally responsible presence on the Budget Committee. Given the war on terrorism, and the additional money needed in the Defense budget, she is looking for innovative ways for the government to pay for a prescription drug plan under Medicare.

## **MISCELLANEOUS LEGISLATION**

Congresswoman McCarthy is a cosponsor of various pieces of legislation related to seniors' healthcare and retirement issues. For more information on these bills, please refer to <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

<b><i>Bill No.</i></b>	<b><i>Title</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
<b>H.R. 3109</b>	Medicare Ambulance Payment Reform Act	Provides payment to Medicare ambulance suppliers for the full cost of providing ambulatory services.
<b>H.R. 1322</b>	Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act	Provides emergency protection for retiree health benefits.
<b>H.R. 848</b>	Social Security Benefits Restoration Act	Eliminates the provision that reduces primary insurance amounts for individuals receiving pensions from non-covered employment.
<b>H.R. 868</b>	Medicare Education and Regulatory Fairness Act	Assures appropriate guidance is given to physicians, service and ambulance providers that submit claims under Medicare.
<b>H.R. 3351</b>	Medicare Physician Payment Fairness Act	Updates payments for the Medicare physician fee schedule for 2002.
<b>H.R. 3431</b>	Stroke Treatment and Ongoing Prevention Act	Creates programs for the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of stroke.
<b>H.R. 4671</b>	Social Security Widow's Benefit Guarantee Act of 2002	Improves benefits for aged survivors, disabled survivors, and divorced spouses